

Las Californias Work Group

Biodiversity Along the Border Committee

Subcommittee Meeting Notes

January 30, 2007

Participants

The following committee members participated in the Las Californias work group:

Jerre Stallcup – Conservation Biology Institute

Fernando Ochoa – Pronatura Noroeste

Juan Cruz Dominiguez - CONAFOR

Ron Saenz – SANDAG

Patricia McCoy – SANDAG

José Francisco Tellez Gomez –CNA

Mike Chapel – US Forest Service

Greg Thompson – Bureau of Land Management

Therese O’Roarke – US Fish and Wildlife Service

Mike Mulligan – CA Dept. Fish and Game

Janaye Byergo - Bureau of Land Management

Pete Gomben - US Forest Service

Lydia Antonio – Consul General of Mexico - Office in San Diego

Esperanza Díaz Lozano – City of Ensenada

Manual Zamora Moreno – City of Mexicali

Meeting Highlights

The discussion began with an overview of the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative. Jerre provided summary of work by TNC, CBI, and others on the California side of the border. Fernando summarized the work in Mexico. One goal for the project is to provide cross-border habitat linkages through strong cooperation among governments and citizens on both sides of the border. Work on both sides of the border is focusing on finding private landowners who are willing to participate in conservation corridor management. Some lands have been already conserved.

The group then discussed related activities in the region including cooperative transportation corridor planning by SANDAG and CalTrans, NCCP planning by the DFG and FWS, and work by IMPLAN, Border 2012, and similar efforts. Several participants from Mexico offered the following cautions and recommendations:

- Juan Cruz recommended that more municipal governments should be included in this discussion because they are the ones who deal with the rules governing the uses of

private lands for conservation and development. He also suggested that the views of the local citizens will be important for making land-use decisions in the region.

- Esperanza Díaz Lozano also reminded the group that local governments will be key participants in a successful conservation program. She stated that conservation in Mexico is challenging because most of the land is in private ownership and development often offers larger financial rewards than conservation.
- José Francisco Tellez Gomez explained that his agency is working on many water improvement projects. He recommended that a key for success will be to clearly describe the desired conditions that are being sought by the Las Californias Initiative.
- Manuel Zamora Moreno described a large green-way program by the City of Mexicali. The project has planted over 26,000 trees along the river known in México by various names, including Laguna México, Laguna Xochimilco, and Laguna Campestre (known in the U.S. as the New River in Imperial County) and they would like to expand the work to other areas. Mr. Zamora observed that non-profits make good managers of these projects because government leaders change after three years.

Following this discussion the work group agreed to meet again on February 27. The team agreed to the following action items that will be accomplished before the next meeting:

1. Lydia Antonio will invite other important government officials from Mexico to attend the next meeting
2. Each agencies will complete the following assessment of the Las Californias Initiative:
 - Review the Las Californias Report
 - Identify opportunities for linkages with existing programs and projects
 - Identify potential sources of funding for the program
 - Evaluate barriers to effective cooperation, as well as opportunities
 - Create an action plan that includes leaders and timelines
3. Each agency will also come prepared to summarize related conservation planning work in the region (NCCP, transportation planning, etc)
4. Mike Chapel will prepare an e-mail list for the group. He will use the list to distribute a link to the Las Californias Report and a summary of the work group meeting.
5. Todd Ferrara will investigate existing barriers for contributing state financial and technical assistance in Mexico.